

the best records on Black people and all ethnic groups.

The great historian, Lerone Bennett, in his presentation in the Family Values Pavilion said, "We must mobilize our resources and come together." We will survive because of the love in the Black family. Other speakers included the international tennis star, Arthur Ashe, who encouraged those in attendance to go out and work to rid the community of drugs and to promote education among Black youngsters.

Why a National Black Family Reunion?

Dr. Dorothy I. Height, president of NCNW, explained the rationale for a national Black Family Reunion by asking the nation to look at the unwritten history of the Black family, its strengths and coping skills. In announcing NCNW sponsorship of the nationwide celebration, she said:

Amidst a background of significant negative projections of the Black family today, there is truly a need to take stock of the whole picture—the unwritten history of the Black family, its strength and coping skills.

With the Black Family Reunion Celebration, NCNW observed its 50th anniversary and instituted a 3-year program to build on the strengths of the Black family.

The Black Family Reunion will encourage constructive efforts to deal with the concerns of the Black family through self-help, public-private sector partnership, Black leadership and the positive role models celebrities and families themselves can provide.... It will help unify the community in the face of national concerns impacting Black families in education, health, drug abuse, teen parenting and employability.

When Mary McLeod Bethune called together 28 women leaders 50 years ago with the dream of forming one organization that would harness the strength of Black women, it was a daring idea that resulted in the National Council of Negro Women.... It is in her spirit that I hope the gathering will provide an occasion and mobilization to build upon the strengths of the Black family.

As a veteran civil rights activist, Dr. Height recalled:

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Rev. Jesse Jackson spoke on the importance of family values and heritage at the first annual Black Family Reunion on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

Photos courtesy of Roland Freeman



Over 200,000 people attended the first annual Black Family Reunion organized by the National Council of Negro Women in Washington, DC.

Photos courtesy of Roland Freeman



Lou Rawls closed the first annual Black Family Reunion with a concert featuring the U.S. Air Force Band.

Photos courtesy of Roland Freeman